



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. Purpose of and Need for Action

1. Project Title: Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range

2. Type of Proposed Action:

- 1) Pave one parking area
- 2) Construct a new classroom and meeting room.
- 3) Install propane heaters in new classroom
- 4) Construct an earthen 360° shooting bay.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action: The Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Club is located on Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks land, and is leased from Ravalli County. The range is near the city of Hamilton, Montana approximately 45 miles south of Missoula. The range location description is: south 990 feet of the NW1/4SW1/4 of Section 15, T6N, R21W, M.P.M., less the north 250 feet of the east 870 feet of this tract. Additionally the SW1/4SW1/4 Section 15, T6N, R21W, P.M.M. (See figure 1).

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) MCA87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The 2007 Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges for public purposes. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

5. Need for the Action(s): The current club consists of four shooting ranges, open pistol, covered pistol, 100 yard and 300 yard ranges. There is a need for improved customer access and increased access for the handicapped. The parking areas are unpaved making them difficult for the handicapped and others, and the 100 yard range is not handicapped accessible. The meeting/classroom is small, cramped and unheated. Currently ranges are used for law enforcement

training but do not meet all of the criteria necessary.

6. Objectives for the Action(s): The overall objective, of the proposal, will be to expand the variety of shooting and educational opportunities at the club while improving safety, handicapped accessibility, and overall operation efficiency and utility. Improve the parking area, enhancing handicapped and general user access, and to provide a more practical and usable classroom/meeting room for all users. Provide an updated and practical pistol range offering 360° shooting for law enforcement and public shooters. Providing improved shooting opportunities and enhanced shooting education programs for Hunter Education, 4-H, Boy Scouts, law enforcement, leagues, etc.

7. Maps and Supporting Figures:



Figure 1 – Hamilton, MT area with Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Club

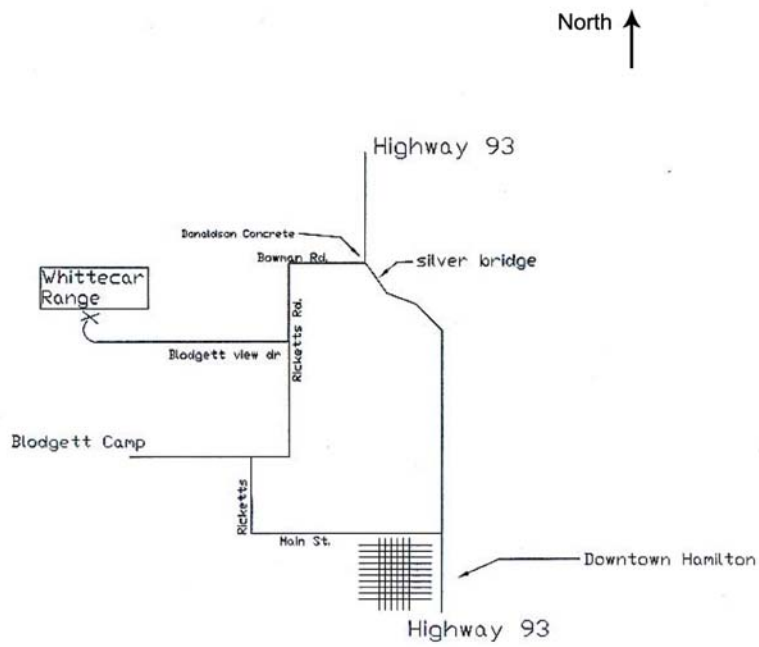


Figure 2 – Map to Range from Hamilton, MT



Figure 3 – Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range

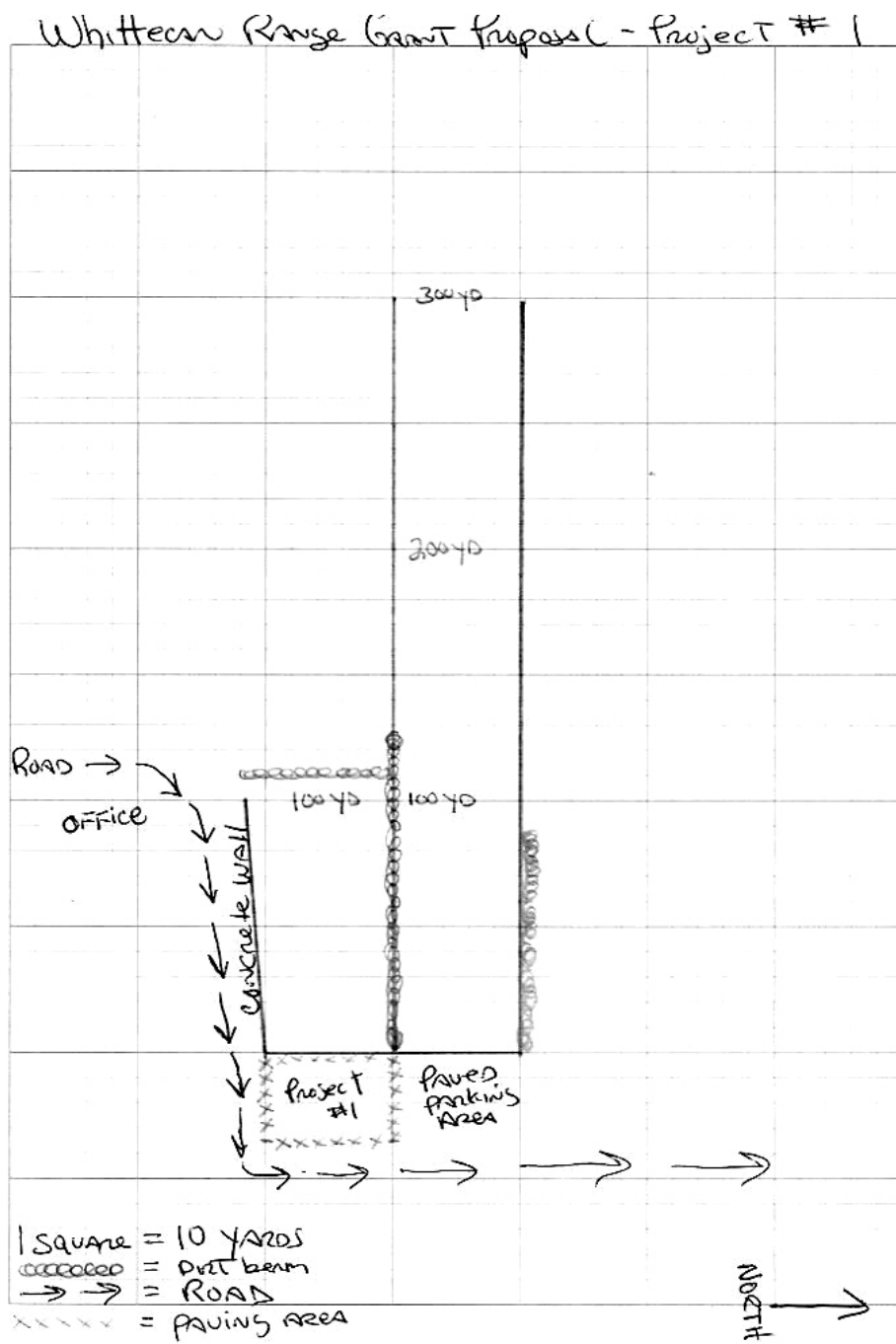


Figure 4 –Project 1 Paved Parking Area

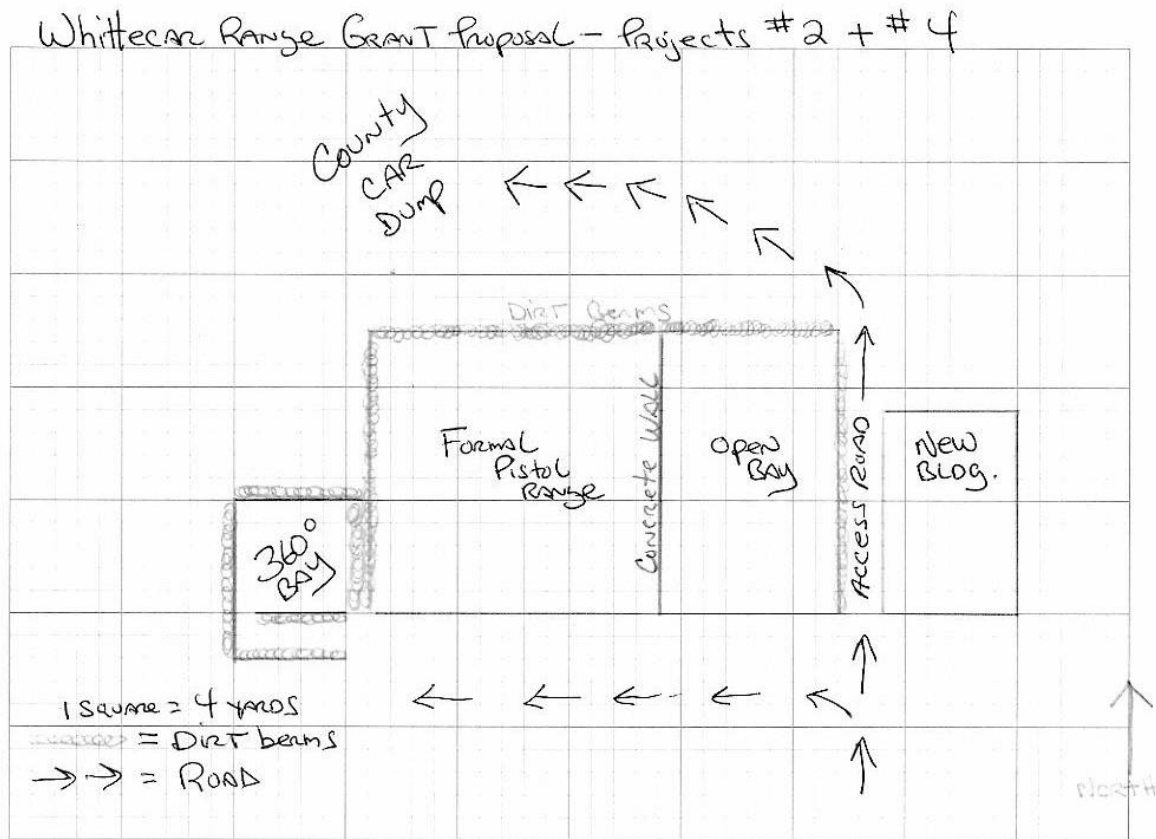


Figure 5 – Projects 2 & 4 - Classroom/Meeting Bldg. & 360° Earthen Shooting Bay

8. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The leased area for the ranges is approximately 25 acres, with improvements safely spread out within the leased properties. (Figures 1 and 2).

9. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The area affected is the existing Whittecarr Rifle and Pistol Club, which has had a lease on this location for 33 years. The facility is located on Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks land and is leased from Ravalli County. The Whittecarr Rifle and Pistol Range is a public range serving the communities of the Bitterroot Valley including Florence, Stevensville, Victor, Pinesdale, Corvalis, Hamilton, Darby and Sula. Current surrounding land usages are: the west is State Forest, to the East & South is Light Residential and to the north is Light Industrial (Car dump). The nearest neighbors to the south and the east are both 200 yards, the north neighbor is the Ravalli county car dump, and the west neighbor is the forested state section. The range property was originally the Hamilton “dump.”

10. Description of Project:

The general range expansion and improvement project is in four parts.

- a. Pave the 5,000 sq. ft. area adjacent to the 100 yard rifle range and connecting the 300 yard rifle range.
- b. Construct a 24'X36' classroom/meeting room.
- c. Install propane heaters in new building
- d. Constructing a 60' X 60' earthen 360° pistol range

In Accordance With (IAW) contracts agreements with Fish, Wildlife & Parks, all projects are to be completed by June 30, 2009.

11. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
N/A	

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$34,660

12. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The ranges provide shooting opportunities and enhanced shooting education programs for Hunter Education, 4-H, Boy Scouts, law enforcement, leagues, etc. The proposed and updated practical pistol range, offering 360° shooting, will increase usage for law enforcement and public shooters alike.

13. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

The proposals have been discussed within the membership of the club and with the associated project vendors and contractors.

14. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

15. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Jim McCormack, 1005 College St., Stevensville, MT 59870, (406) 777-5779

16. Other Pertinent Information:

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 29, 2008

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas)

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

2. & 5. There are neither delineated wetlands nor perennial streams.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		#5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		#9
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

5. Range site plans, construction and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meet the standards of safety for the range participants and the public at large. Range design and safety follow NRA's guidelines. Range access is controlled with a locked gate and a full time Caretaker. Additionally the entire Range is fenced and signed.

9. The nearest neighbors to the south and the east are both 200 yards, the north neighbor is the Ravalli county car dump, and the west neighbor is the forested state section. The range property was originally the Hamilton "dump."

Part III. Environmental Consequences

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? NO

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? This proposed action has no impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Identification of the Preferred Alternatives:

The proposed alternative A, alternative B and the no action alternative were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in paragraph 10 (Description of Project) An overall range expansion and improvement project is to add a paved parking area, a new heated classroom & meeting building, and construct a 360° earthen shooting bay.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Sports Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active rifle & pistol range without proposed expansion and improvements.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Two alternatives have been considered, **A** (Proposed Alternative) and **B** (No Action Alternative). There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent.

Neither the proposed alternative (**A**) nor the no action alternative (**B**) would have any significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

- There are beneficial consequences to Acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative (A)** increasing shooting sports opportunities in the Hamilton area through a range expansion and improvement project, paving a parking area, constructing a heated classroom/meeting room, and constructing a 360° earthen shooting bay.
- The **No Action Alternative (B)** would be not to expand the range with additional shooting opportunities and not make the proposed improvements Land use would remain the same. Present activities include rifle and pistol ranges without the proposed

improvements to the operations. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

NONE

List and explain proposed mitigative measures (stipulations):

NONE

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

Jim McCormack, 1005 College St., Stevensville, MT 59870

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PART IV NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being proposed are on properties leased from Ravalli County by the Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Club. The low impact activities proposed, and the increased recreational opportunity, all indicate that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative (A). The 33 year history of the Whittecar Rifle and Pistol Club providing shooting opportunities to its members and the public indicates support for the proposed alternative. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (A) for the expansion proposals outlined in Para. 2 & 10.

EA prepared by: GENE R. HICKMAN

Ecological Assessments

Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: July 17, 2008

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

None required.

Describe public involvement, if any:

Announcement for EA comment will be published in the Ravalli Republic and on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website to allow an opportunity for public review. Additionally the EA will be available for review on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website and the deadline for public comments is August 25, 2008.